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Young People's Department of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church

Annual Report

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156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Young People's Department.

The work of the Young People's Department during the past year was necessarily of a tentative character. New basic lines demanded a remodeling of the superstructure in some directions, even though every effort was made to retain so much of the old as might be consistent with the prosecution of the work under the guidance of the new plans.

By the action of the General Assembly of 1896, the two Young People's Departments—that of the Board of Home Missions, and that of the Woman's Executive Committee—were consolidated, and one Secretary was given charge of the correspondence from headquarters, the assignment of special objects, and the presentation of the two-fold work of Home Missions—the evangelistic and the educational. No change was made in the methods already in use in enlisting the Sunday schools in Home Mission work, neither did the action referred to affect the relation of the

Bands or Young People's Societies with headquarters, although these all remain under the care and supervision of the Young People's Department.

The obligation of informing Presbyterian Christian Endeavorers concerning Home Missions was, however, given primarily to the women of the missionary societies, with the understanding that the preaching and school work should be presented impartially, and that the receipts from these societies should be divided equally between the Board of Home Missions and the Woman's Executive Committee, all "specials" being properly credited and applied. This duty given to the women of the church was to be conducted locally in accordance with the counsel of the pastor and session and at headquarters under the supervision of the officers of the Board. It brought to the work of training the Endeavorers in Home Mission work the complexly-simple organization of the auxiliaries of the Woman's Executive Committee, the help of the synodical and presbyterial societies with their officers, and placed especially upon the Young People's Secretary of both synod and presbytery the double duty of presenting side by side the two Home Mission claims. Twenty-two of the twenty-nine synods in the United States have such officers, as have also one hundred and eighty-three of the two hundred and fourteen

presbyteries into which the synods are divided. These with one mind responded to the call to undertake the work upon the new lines, and to them especially is due the fact of the far-reaching influence of the plans in the short space of twelve months. It is only fair to state that those synods and presbyteries which have not elected secretaries, whose especial care should be the Young People's work, are, with scarcely an exception, those in which there are but few churches, and in which the other officers felt that they could undertake this work.

There is an old story that "three philosophers heard of the camel and determined to investigate it. The Englishman hunted through the musty folios of the British Museum to find what had been said about the beast; the German went into his study, locked the door, lit his pipe, and began to evolve a conception of the animal from his inner consciousness; the Frenchman went down to Sahara to see it." In order to establish closer and more vital relations between the workers in the societies and those in the fields the latter method has been adopted, and it has been the custom of the Young People's Department to suggest to the Christian Endeavorers and the Juniors of the various synods the support of certain missionaries, and to establish through the medium of the department a system of communication between these widely separated, yet closely

bound, workers. The system has proven itself to be one of ever-increasing success, and has been of helpful value to both sides; on the one hand, the wearied and almost discouraged missionary has been strengthened and cheered, has been upheld and comforted by the knowledge of those who were "holding the rope" so securely, and by the prayers daily ascending to the throne on his behalf; the worker at home has learned new lessons of the realities of the mission work being done in this land, has had the bond of union cemented by the strong ties of knowledge, of personal interest and of friendship, and has been stimulated to greater efforts by the examples of unflinching heroism and patient endurance ever before him.

Fifteen thousand one hundred and eighty-eight copies of printed and cyclostyled letters from missionaries and mission teachers have been prepared by the Young People's Department for the various Young People's organizations during the past year, and repeated testimonies as to their soul-stirring influence have been received.

Missionary information too often resembles a handful of vari-colored, brilliant beads, loosened from the string which made of them when properly strung thereon, the necklace which in its entirety charmed, and each bead of which, viewed in its rightful place, was seen

with the surroundings which gave a due sense of its proportions. Too often a series of thrilling incidents, of amusing anecdotes, of touching tales, are the handful of beads for the missionary meeting; each is seen alone and interests for the moment, but is forgotten as the next is viewed. To provide a stout string made of strands of knowledge so firmly twisted into a complete whole that it cannot be broken, and to place upon it in their proper relations the facts which have been gleaned, has been the aim of this Department. It has striven not so much to arouse an interest in one especial field or in one isolated case, but rather to strengthen the impulse toward systematic and continuous missionary work. It has been effort put forth, not for immediate returns, but rather with the thought of the future of the work done through the organizations of the Presbyterian Church. The future, therefore, must answer questions of success or failure.

During the fiscal year of 1895-96 the Young People's Societies contributed to the work of Home Missions through the regular organizations the sum of $22,833.34. During the year 1896-97 the same societies have given $25,710.87, of which amount the Christian Endeavor Societies, including Juniors, have given $24,189.88; that is, $12,094.94 to each—the Board of Home Missions and the Woman's Executive Committee. The increase may not seem very

large, but when taken in connection with the $12,617.04 raised during the same period by the Endeavorers toward the Thank Offering Fund, to be used in the payment of the debt reported last year, it must be accounted a good increase. "The two Home Mission claims have been presented equally," writes a Synodical Secretary of Young People's Work, "and our total is somewhat more than we had at this time last year. There will, however, be a shortage at the close of the books, owing to the Thank Offering. Many societies which give but once a year sent their contributions to that." That this may have been the case in other synods there is little doubt. The many special appeals for outside causes, as well as the continued financial depression, have no doubt also affected the receipts.

From mission schools and churches the Endeavorers have sent offerings toward the Thank Offering Fund and toward the current work; also many messages of love and loyalty, "I hardly know what we should do without our Christian Endeavor Society," said one missionary, "it is the backbone of all our efforts," and similar words of commendation have come from various fields.

"All of our presbyteries have advanced except one," writes California's synodical officer, "and that in spite of very, *very* heavy outside expenses. It seems too good to be true."

"System in giving and information are what I have aimed at, rather than more money," says Iowa's officer, whose synod forges ahead in Christian Endeavor work in a most hopeful and inspiriting way, proving that the good foundation is telling. A Presbyterial Secretary from Minnesota suggests to her societies: "Pledge larger than you think you will be able to pay, for you will meet your pledge and probably add to it. This is my experience," and many other equally pertinent messages come from various localities.

There has been an effort made to have the work of the Young People's Department presented at the denominational rallies held in connection with the various Christian Endeavor State Conventions. While it has not been possible to attend all, many of these have been reached, and the exceptional opportunity given of pressing upon the attention of Presbyterian young people the claims of Home Missions. Their attention has been called to the polity of their own denomination, the organizations through which its mission work is urged, and the obedience and loyalty which they, as parts of this great body, owe to the support of its undertakings. Such a convention is the one occasion during the year when there are gathered together so many young people of the church; it is at a time when they are ready and anxious to learn, and to be helped in planning for the work of the coming year; it is the great

and glorious opportunity of bringing before them the needs of their own land. We are glad to note the effort being made to lengthen the time given to these denominational rallies, in order that they may be even more helpful than they have already been.

Two Sundays have been, by the action of General Assembly, set apart for the special presentation to the Sunday schools of the two phases of Home Mission work. A Sunday in February is given to the Board of Home Missions, while one in November is designated for the Woman's Executive Committee. Special programmes were prepared for these two days, and it was most encouraging to find how generally these were used, and how many copies were needed to supply the demand. An effort is made at these seasons to bring the work before the children of the schools in its entirety, to impress upon them the needs of our country, and to acquaint them with the efforts being put forth in its behalf. When it is possible the lesson of the day is incorporated in the programme and thus the omission of one lesson is not necessitated Many pastors and superintendents have arranged for special services in connection with the programme, while others have used it at the regular church services, thus bringing the work to the adults as well as the children. During the year 1895–96, Sunday schools gave to the work of the Board $16.908.82, while durin ; the year 1896–97, they have given $20.777.16, an increase of $3,868.34. During the year 1895–96, Sunday schools gave to the work of the Woman's Executive Committe $19,523.97, while during the year 1896–97 they made an advance of $33.29, having given $19.557.26.

Activity, not passivity, is the demand of the

age. The powers of evil are not hesitating, neither are they timorous; so our young people's organizations need to be aggressively urgent in good works, and not timidly so. "And ye shall be witnesses unto me," came the message to the disciples awaiting at Jerusalem the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, and when He had been received they prayed, "Grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." Such a spirit as that poured upon the disciples almost nineteen hundred years ago, one that gave firmness to the wavering, boldness to the gentle, and power for unquestioning allegiance to all, is that for which prayer should ascend in these closing days of the nineteenth century; a spirit which will enable this army of the young of the church to march forth under the banner of Him of whom Peter unhesitatingly testified, "We are His witnesses." The boldness of a Peter, the gentleness of a John, the consecration of a Stephen, the skill of a Paul, all are needed for the present conflict, and as never before should the young people's organizations be enlisted to bear their share in the tumult and the strife. Each society, and each individual should feel not only the desire to be engaged in the struggle, but the absolute necessity of bearing a part. Let each be up and doing!

Systematic giving, proportionate giving, prayerful giving, these form the keynote of the Young People's Department for the year 1897–98. "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, *as God hath prospered him*," for "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not"

M. KATHARINE JONES, *Secretary.*

TREASURY DIAGRAM.

Home Mission Board

SUPPORTS

MISSIONARIES } Among Americans and the people of the exceptional populations, including representatives of thirty foreign nations within the borders of the United States,
EVANGELISTS }

BY CONTRIBUTIONS

From Churches, Sabbath schools, Christian Endeavors, Junior Christian Endeavors, and Individuals.

Woman's Board of Home Missions

SUPPORTS

MISSIONARY } Among Alaskans, Mexicans, Mormons, Indians, Mountaineers, Freedmen,
TEACHERS }

BY CONTRIBUTIONS

From Women's Societies, Sabbath schools, Christian Endeavors, Junior Christian Endeavors, and Individuals.

It is advised that all money contributed by the C. E. and Junior Societies be forwarded by the local treasurers to the Presbyterial Treasurer of the Women's Societies, and that she send money as designated: that intended for the Board of Home Missions to MR. HARVEY C OLIN, Treasurer, and that intended for the Woman's B ard of Home Missions to MISS S. F. LINCOLN, Treasurer.